



NORTHERN FOREST FORAGING GUIDE



Northern Forest Foraging Guide



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Ontario's forests, meadows and waters provide an incredible range of nutritious and delicious edible wild plants. Ontario Nature has prepared this foraging guide as an introduction to this local resource, and to encourage people to get outside and experience the wonders the natural world provides.

The native and naturalized trees, shrubs, herbaceous plants and fungi listed in this guide are a sample of some of the abundant local species that can be harvested sustainably in Northern Ontario, though there are many other wild edibles to explore. The guide is intended to be a starting point for people interested in foraging for edible wild plants and should not be considered to be a definitive resource for their identification and use.

Basic Rules for Harvesting Edible Wild Plants and Fungi

Harvesting edible wild plants can be a fun, educational and sustainable activity for all ages if it is done properly. Ontario Nature has identified some basic rules for harvesting wild plants to ensure the safety of participants and the sustainability of plants involved.

- Be sure you know what you are harvesting, and eat only plants you

can positively identify as edible. Learning about plants from a local expert, consulting books and taking courses or workshops are recommended (see the resources at the end of this guide).

- Harvest plants in areas where you know the risk of contamination from industrial and other pollution is low.
- Eat only a small quantity of any plant you have not eaten before and assess how it affects you before eating more.



TREES



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- Although foraging for edible plants is permitted on most public land in Ontario, obtain permission from the owner before collecting plants on private property. Another best practice is to obtain permission from the local First Nation community before harvesting on traditional territory.
- Management goals vary for protected areas and nature reserves. Ensure that wild food foraging is permitted in these areas before harvesting.
- Most importantly, take only what you can use and use what you take. Edible wild plants are a shared resource. Users of them must take responsibility for ensuring that they will continue to thrive year after year.

Sustainable Harvesting

Improper harvesting techniques and overharvesting can have a significant negative impact on the ability of a species to reproduce. This practice can lead to the disappearance of a species from an area and the loss of a local food source, affecting both humans and other species. A general rule is to harvest only 5 percent of any individual patch of a species and only collect from patches within a maximum of 25 percent of a total area. For example, collecting a small handful of berries from every fourth plant on a hillside. Following this guideline helps ensure that the plants are able to reproduce. For plants that have a long life cycle and take many years to grow to maturity, sustainable harvesting entails picking even less.

Ideally, people will become exceptional stewards of Ontario's natural areas. Sustainable harvesting methods relating to trees, shrubs, plants and fungi vary, so in some cases additional research may be required to ensure sustainability. The timing of harvesting is also important, as some parts of a plant (such as flowers or fruit) are not available year-round, while others (such as tree needles) are. Not taking more than is needed at one time is also important, as taking too much reduces available resources for other users and contributes to increased waste of these resources. Harvesting too much can also impact a species' ability to grow and reproduce.



Kendal Donahue

Practicing sustainable methods of harvesting the species listed in this guide is crucial to minimizing human impact on them and other species that rely on them. Such methods contribute to increased food security and independence, which are particularly



HERBACEOUS PLANTS



FUNGI

important in communities where healthy foods are not always available or easy to obtain.

Caution!

If you are uncertain about the identification of a species, before consuming it consult additional field guides and expert sources to confirm what it is. Experts suggest that if you have not eaten a plant before, try only a small sample of it; people's responses to even known edible species may vary. When you use a plant for the first time, allergic reactions or other sensitivities may occur; if they do, consult a medical professional. Indigenous peoples have traditional medicinal uses for some of the plants mentioned in this guide, and many of these uses have been included in the text. Consult a medical professional or expert Indigenous knowledge holder before using any plant for medicinal purposes.

Disclaimer

Ontario Nature takes no responsibility whatsoever for any adverse health effects due to the consumption or other use of any plant described in this guide. It is intended to provide general information only. Check with your healthcare provider before using wild plants to treat any medical condition. Before consuming any wild plants, you should be absolutely certain of their identification. Seek expert advice and use at least two reputable field guides to confirm the identification of a

species. Be extremely cautious about look-alike and poisonous species.



Acknowledgments

Ontario Nature would like to acknowledge all of the experts consulted during the preparation of this guide. They are listed at the back of the guide, along with other resources. Additionally, the guide includes Indigenous knowledge about using and preparing plants, and Ontario Nature thanks Indigenous knowledge holders for their sharing and contribution.

First printed in 2017, updated in
September 2022 © Ontario Nature



TREES



SHRUBS



Eastern White Cedar *Thuja occidentalis*

IDENTIFICATION

- Large conifer tree with rough, crumbly bark
- Leaves scaly and very fragrant

LOCATION

- Moist areas in forests and swamps or near water

HARVESTING TIME

- Year-round

USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- Tea made from the leaves is said to soothe the throat, and tea made from the bark is said to aid kidney function
- Soaking in bath water containing cedar leaves is said to soothe rashes, skin irritation and shingles
- Cedar oil can be produced by putting the cedar buds/tips in a jar with olive oil and letting it sit, sealed, for 4-6 weeks. Some people use this oil to treat warts and cold sores, and as a natural insect repellent

CAUTIONS

- Consume only a small quantity, because cedar leaves release small amounts of toxins



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Jack Pine *Pinus banksiana*

IDENTIFICATION

- Short needles in clusters of two that are not twisted together
- Cones closed and tight to the branches

LOCATION

- Throughout boreal forest, but also in some open areas

HARVESTING TIME

- Year-round

USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- Some people use the needles to prepare tea high in vitamin C (honey or cinnamon may be added to mask the bitter taste)
- Some people chew the raw pitch to treat sore throats
- Some people warm the sap and apply it externally as a salve which is said to relieve joint and muscle pain, swelling, bites, burns and irritations

CAUTIONS

- Do not eat this plant if you are pregnant (can cause miscarriage)



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TREES



SHRUBS



Paper Birch *Betula papyrifera*

IDENTIFICATION

- Older bark white and papery, younger bark smooth
- Triangular leaves with toothed margins

LOCATION

- Sunny, moist areas

HARVESTING TIME

- Spring to fall

USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- Sap can be boiled to reduce it to a syrup, which has half the sugar of maple syrup and is more savoury (tastes similar to soy sauce or Worcestershire sauce)
- Inner bark can be added to soups and stews or dried and powdered to use as a flour
- Catkins and leaves can be added raw to salads or cooked in vegetable side dishes
- Tea can be made from the twigs and leaves

CAUTIONS

- Harvest the inner bark only from recently downed branches or small branches clipped from the main tree to minimize the impact on overall tree health and growth



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Beaked Hazel *Corylus cornuta*

IDENTIFICATION

- Up to 3 m high, often in thickets of multiple stems
- Alternate egg-shaped leaves, irregular and double toothed margins
- Single or small clusters of nuts, with a very long “beak” as a husk around them

LOCATION

- Dry to fresh sites with partial shade to sun, primarily in hardwood dominated stands

HARVESTING TIME

- August and September

USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- Nuts can be eaten raw, as well as lightly roasted in the same ways as a hazelnut
- Nuts can be ground down into a meal
- With a large nut harvest, oils can be expressed and added to various dishes for a nutty flavour
- Tea made from the bark is said to help treat colds and fever, and used as a wash for hives



TREES



SHRUBS



Cranberry

Vaccinium oxycoccos and macrocarpon

IDENTIFICATION

- Mostly under 20 cm in height
- Flowers pink, berries red/purple

LOCATION

- Wet areas and near bogs, ponds and lakes

HARVESTING TIME

- September to November (best after first frost)

USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- Berries can be eaten raw or processed into jams or jellies, juices, sauces or teas
- Berries can also be added to both sweet and savoury foods, such as pies, muffins, soups, stews and salads
- The health benefits of cranberries are said to include reduced risk of the formation of kidney stones, and relief from bladder infections, cramps and nausea
- Tannins in the cranberries are said to improve heart health and reduce both tooth decay and the formation of plaque on teeth

CAUTIONS

- Consume only in moderation to avoid possible irritation of stomach



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American Red Raspberry

Rubus idaeus var. *strigosus*

IDENTIFICATION

- Up to 2 m in height
- Prickly spreading stems, becoming smoother with age
- Alternate compound leaves on prickly stalks, usually three to five leaflets per leaf
- Flowers white/green

LOCATION

- Can grow in a wide variety of habitats
- Tends to grow spaced apart in shaded areas and more densely in open fields

HARVESTING TIME

- Summer

USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- Berries can be eaten raw, made into jams, jellies, or juices or added to desserts
- Young, peeled stems are edible in both raw or cooked preparations
- Some people boil the leaves into a tea to treat diarrhea and cramps

CAUTIONS

- Do not consume wilted leaves, which can be toxic



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TREES



SHRUBS



Northern Bush-Honeysuckle

Diervilla lonicera

IDENTIFICATION

- 1 m or less in height
- Leaves usually oval but pointed at end (edges tend to curl inwards)
- Flowers yellow for most of the season, turning orange by late summer

LOCATION

- Sunny to moderately shady wet or dry areas, edge habitat

HARVESTING TIME

- June to July

USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- Infusions made from the bark and stems are said to flush toxins from the body and improve kidney health
- This plant was used in traditional Indigenous medicine, though this use is not common today



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Prickly Rose *Rosa acicularis*

IDENTIFICATION

- Up to 1.5 m in height with prickly stems and branches
- Red hips (fruit) usually 1 to 2 cm in length, flowers pink

LOCATION

- Open woods, thickets, rocky slopes

HARVESTING TIME

- Spring to winter

USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- Raw petals can be added to salads, teas and jellies and are said to soothe headaches, mouth sores and indigestion
- Buds, young shoots and leaves can be eaten raw or sautéed with other vegetables
- Rose hips are high in vitamins and nutrients and can be dried and boiled in teas, or preserved in jams or jellies (though this can be very time-consuming due to their small size and the large number required to make a small to medium sized batch of jam)
- Three rosehips are said to contain the same amount of vitamin C as one orange

CAUTIONS

- Use only whole rosehips or their fleshy outside layer, as the seeds can cause intestinal discomfort



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TREES



SHRUBS



Willow *Salix spp.*

IDENTIFICATION

- 0.5 to 10 m in height, depending on species
- Four buds completely encircling the stem
- Flower shape, size and colour variable,

- Variable depending on species, but

- Spring to summer (bark and catkins best in spring, leaves best in summer)

USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- Shoots are watery in taste and texture, and can be used similarly to cucumber
- Catkins can be cooked with other vegetables or added to soups for a boost of vitamin C
- Bark contains salicin (similar to Aspirin, or acetylsalicylic acid) and can be chewed or made into a tea that is said to relieve pain, inflammation and digestive problems
- Leaves and twigs can be boiled to make a rinse that is said to increase the shininess of hair and reduce dandruff

CAUTIONS

- Do not consume willow if you have a known sensitivity to Aspirin



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Saskatoon Berry *Amelanchier* spp.

IDENTIFICATION

- Grows as a straggling small shrub, occasionally up to 5 m tall
- Leaves are alternately arranged with an oval or elliptical shape
- *Amelanchier* species may be difficult to tell apart, but the berries from each species are all edible

LOCATION

- Variety of habitats, ranging from dry to moist areas

HARVESTING TIME

- July and August

USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- Berries are excellent when eaten fresh or cooked
- Fruit can be dried for later use
- Can be ground up with tallow and dried meat to make pemmican
- Berries are high in iron and copper
- Stems and roots of the plant boiled into a tea are said to treat lung issues associated with tuberculosis, colds and fevers



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TREES



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Bluebead Lily (Clinton Lily) *Clintonia borealis*

IDENTIFICATION

- Up to 40 cm in height
- Large leaves with parallel veins and smooth margins
- Yellow-green flowers and blue berries on long stalks

LOCATION

- Forests with open understorey

HARVESTING TIME

- Spring

USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- Leaves can be eaten raw or cooked and taste similar to cucumber
- A poultice made from the leaves can be used on wounds and bruises and is said to prevent infection and promote healing

CAUTIONS

- Do not eat the berries, which are toxic



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Burdock *Arctium* spp.

IDENTIFICATION

- 0.5 to 1.5 m in height (on average, will vary by species)
- Pink/purple flowers with large burrs
- Heart-shaped hairy green leaves with soft white undersides

LOCATION

- Roadsides, disturbed areas

HARVESTING TIME

- August to October

USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- Young leaves (picked in spring or early summer) can be added raw to salads, cooked in soups and stews, or boiled (one or two changes of water may be needed to reduce the bitter quality of the leaves)
- Peeled roots can be boiled, stir-fried or pickled
- Medicinal teas made from the leaves are thought to help purify the blood and improve liver and kidney function

CAUTIONS

- Do not consume if you are pregnant (can cause spotting or miscarriage) or diabetic (can affect blood sugar levels)



TREES



SHRUBS



Cattail *Typha* spp.

IDENTIFICATION

- 1 to 3 m in height
- Leaves long, slender and stiff
- Flowers forming tight cylindrical clusters

LOCATION

- Marshes, lakes, and streams with calm waters

HARVESTING TIME

- Spring for flowers and pollen, early spring to fall for roots and shoots

USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- The core of the stem tastes similar to cucumber and can be eaten raw, boiled, sautéed or fried
- When green, flower heads can be steamed or roasted once the stalk and papery outer layer are removed
- The pollen can be collected by shaking the flower head into a bag and then sifting the contents to separate out the pollen, and can be used in both savoury and sweet recipes

CAUTIONS

- Ensure that you have correctly identified this plant before eating it, because young cattails may be mistaken for some wild members of the Iris family, which are poisonous
- Avoid cattails growing in stagnant water area due to their unappealing taste and possible uptake of contaminants
- Do not eat brown flower heads



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Common Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale*

IDENTIFICATION

- 5 to 45 cm in height, with a long taproot
- Rubbery stem containing a milky white liquid
- Bright yellow flower at the end of the stalk

LOCATION

- Disturbed areas, roadsides, lawns and gardens, meadows

HARVESTING TIME

- May to August (stem and leaves increasingly bitter later in the season)



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USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- Leaves can be eaten fresh in salads, cooked in soups and stews, or dried and used to make tea (young leaves are preferable as older leaves become bitter)
- When roasted in the oven for several hours, the roots develop a coffee/cocoa like flavour and when ground are good for making tea or using in baking
- Stems can be boiled and used as a substitute for pasta
- Flowers can be added to salads
- Dandelion is thought to decrease blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol
- The leaves of dandelion plants grown in shady areas are less bitter than the leaves of plants grown in sunny areas
- Drying or freezing dandelions best preserves them for later use

CAUTIONS

- Avoid eating dandelions from lawns or urban landscapes on which pesticides and pollutants may have been deposited



TREES



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Common Evening-Primrose

Oenothera biennis

IDENTIFICATION

- 0.5 to 1.5 m in height with a hairy stem
- Leaves slightly toothed at margins and attached directly to the stem
- Leafy spike of large yellow flowers at the top of the plant

LOCATION

- Moderately dry, open sites, roadsides

HARVESTING TIME

- June to August

USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- Roots, which are similar in taste and texture to parsnips, can be eaten raw or boiled for two hours (changing the water several times lessens the peppery flavour)
- Cooked roots can be fried, pickled, roasted and served as a side dish, added to soups and stews or candied in syrup
- Young leaves, flower buds and green pods can all be boiled like other leafy greens (changing the water several times)



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Common Mullein *Verbascum thapsus*

IDENTIFICATION

- First year of growth produces soft, woolly leaves similar to lamb's ears
- Second year of growth produces a flowering stalk up to 1.8 m in height with yellow flowers

LOCATION

- Dry, sunny, disturbed areas such as roadsides, open fields and areas near railways

HARVESTING TIME

- July to September



USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- Leaves and flowers can be used in salads or teas, though teas must be strained to remove seeds
- Teas made with the flowers and leaves are said to be useful in treating colds and diarrhea, while teas made with the stalks are said to be useful in treating cramps and fevers
- Some people use the leaves in a poultice to treat ulcers and hemorrhoids
- Mullein contains a variety of vitamins and nutrients essential for healthy growth and development
- Campers know this plant as “cowboy’s toilet paper,” but when used as such it may irritate sensitive skin

CAUTIONS

- Before consuming tea made from mullein, strain out the seeds, as the seed hairs may irritate the throat



TREES



SHRUBS



Common Plantain *Plantago major*

IDENTIFICATION

- Up to 15 cm in height
- Leaves egg shaped with wavy margins and almost parallel veins

LOCATION

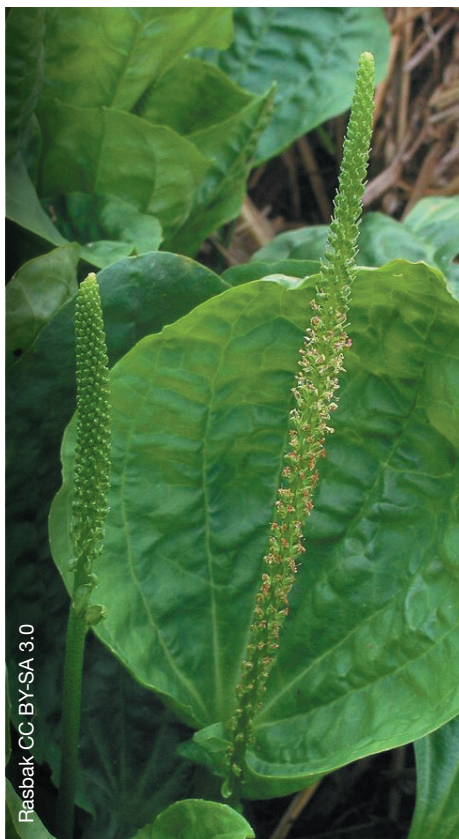
- Disturbed areas, clearings, roadsides, edge habitat

HARVESTING TIME

- Summer to early fall

USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- Leaves can be eaten raw in salads, steamed or sautéed, or tossed in oil and cooked in the oven (prepared like kale chips)
- Some people use the leaves in a poultice to treat insect bites and stings
- Some people make tea from the leaves which is said to soothe toothaches, coughs, sore throats and breathing problems
- To preserve the taste, texture and nutritional properties of the leaves, plantain should be stored in a dark place



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Common Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*

IDENTIFICATION

- 10 to 80 cm in height
- Leaves long and slender, similar in appearance to a fern
- Flowers yellow, white or pink, forming flat clusters

LOCATION

- Meadows, disturbed areas, roadsides, waste areas

HARVESTING TIME

- June to September

USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- Leaves can be eaten raw or cooked, but young leaves are best in raw preparations like salad
- Tea made by boiling the flowers and leaves is said to be useful in treating sore throats, colds and fevers
- Some people use the leaves as a poultice to stop bleeding, as well as a natural band aid due to the plant's antibacterial properties
- Hang the plant to dry at room temperature, away from direct sunlight

CAUTIONS

- Do not consume this plant if you are pregnant



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TREES



SHRUBS



Field Horsetail *Equisetum arvense*

IDENTIFICATION

- Two forms of growth: in spring, stiff, branchless stem (10 to 20 cm in height); from summer to early fall, flexible, green, feather-like plant (10 to 80 cm in height)
- Usually growing in large clusters

LOCATION

- Clearings, open areas in conifer and mixed-wood forests, roadsides and disturbed areas

HARVESTING TIME

- Early summer



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USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- Some people use the leaves and shoots to prepare tea which is said to be useful in treating kidney stones and inflammation; this tea can also be used as a hair rinse for shinier hair
- Shoots, which contain essential nutrients, can be cooked thoroughly with other vegetables
- The whole plant can be used as a steel wool substitute when camping because of the high levels of silica in the stem and leaves
- Outer layers are tough and fibrous and should be removed before use
- Because horsetail contains high levels of silica, it is said to strengthen hair, nails and bones when consumed

CAUTIONS

- Do not consume horsetail growing in contaminated soil, because these plants can absorb toxins from it
- Because horsetail contains silica and the kidneys cannot process large amounts of it, consume only small amounts of this plant



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Goldenrod *Solidago spp.*

IDENTIFICATION

- 30 to 150 cm in height, depending on species
- Long slender leaves with sharply toothed margins
- Long clusters of yellow flowers at the top of the plant

LOCATION

- Moist areas, forests, fields, roadsides, disturbed areas

HARVESTING TIME

- July to September for flowers and leaves, fall or early spring for roots

USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- Flowers can be added to salads, and leaves can be cooked like spinach or added to soups, stews or casseroles
- Some people boil the flowers and leaves to make a tea which is said to be useful in treating cold or flu symptoms, gas, cramps and headaches
- Blanched leaves can be frozen and used at a later date
- When eaten raw or cooked, goldenrod has a licorice-like flavour
- Roots contain inulin, which is said to promote healthy stomach bacteria

NOTE

- Many people believe they are allergic to insect-pollinated goldenrod, but usually it is ragweed (which is wind pollinated) that causes their symptoms



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TREES



SHRUBS



Lamb's Quarters (White Goosefoot)

Chenopodium album

IDENTIFICATION

- Stems 30 cm to 1 m in height
- Leaves variable in shape, with a white coating on the underside
- Flowers forming long green clusters

LOCATION

- Gardens, disturbed areas, areas near agricultural activity

HARVESTING TIME

- Summer

USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- Fresh young leaves are best and can be eaten raw in salads or added to smoothies and soups or other cooked preparations
- Leaves are similar in taste and preparation to spinach, with four times as much calcium and 50 percent more protein – six cups of raw leaves cook down to about 1/2 cup
- The plant produces small seeds in late summer or early fall, similar in appearance to quinoa (as the plants are relatives), which can be sprinkled on salads

CAUTIONS

- Because it contains some oxalic acid, consume only small amounts of this plant
- Do not consume large amounts of seeds, due to the saponins they contain



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Ostrich Fern *Matteuccia struthiopteris*

IDENTIFICATION

- Approximately 1 m in height
- Two forms of fronds: long, feather-like green fronds and short brown fronds
- Bright green emerging fronds (fiddleheads) tightly coiled with a scaly brown paper-like covering and a U-shaped groove in celery-like stem

LOCATION

- Moist areas, near water (streams, lakes), swamp edges, some open forests

HARVESTING TIME

- Mid-spring

USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- A popular way to prepare fiddleheads is to first boil them and then fry or sauté with butter and seasoning
- Cooked fiddleheads can be added to salads and soups and taste similar to asparagus
- Fiddleheads should be collected when less than 15 cm in height and still tightly curled
- They keep in the fridge for about two weeks or can be stored either dried or frozen (clean and blanch before freezing)

CAUTIONS

- Consume only cooked ostrich ferns, because raw preparations may cause stomach irritation
- To ensure the plant's survival, take no more than half the fiddleheads on it
- As other species of ferns may be toxic if consumed, ensure you correctly identify ostrich ferns by consulting guides, images and experts



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TREES



SHRUBS



Pearly Everlasting

Anaphalis margaritacea

IDENTIFICATION

- 10 to 90 cm in height, covered in smooth white hairs
- Leaves long, narrow and hairy on the underside
- Flowers small and white with yellow eyes, usually clustered at the top of the plant

LOCATION

- Sunny open areas, disturbed areas, edge habitat



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HARVESTING TIME

- July to September

USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- Some people use the leaves in a tea which is said to relieve sore throats, indigestion, nausea or diarrhea (younger leaves are more palatable than older leaves)
- A poultice made from the leaves is said to relieve joint pain or arthritis
- Indigenous peoples smoked the dried leaves of this plant both to relieve headaches and breathing problems, and also used the leaves in traditional smudging ceremonies to promote health and wellness

CAUTIONS

- Use only the leaves in edible applications as they contain the beneficial nutritional and medicinal properties



HERBACEOUS PLANTS



Red Clover *Trifolium pratense*

IDENTIFICATION

- 5 to 40 cm in height with hairy stems
- Classic clover leaf with three leaflets
- Light green V-shaped mark on each leaf
- Flower round and red/pink

LOCATION

- Fields, pastures, roadsides, backyards

HARVESTING TIME

- Late spring to fall

USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- Flowers can be eaten raw in salads, made into a detoxifying tea or lightly battered and deep-fried
- Clover is said to relieve premenstrual syndrome symptoms, such as cramping and hot flashes, and is thought to reduce bad cholesterol and plaque that causes heart disease
- The flowers and leaves can be dried and stored for later use

CAUTIONS

- Consume the leaves and flowers only in moderation, because they may cause bloating
- Do not consume clover if you are pregnant or nursing as it can affect the hormonal balance of the body



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TREES



SHRUBS



Stinging Nettle *Urtica dioica*

IDENTIFICATION

- Up to 3 m in height, and covered in stiff “guard hairs”
- Flowers green, sometimes with a pinkish hue

LOCATION

- Disturbed areas, hillsides, stream banks, moist woodlands

HARVESTING TIME

- Spring to early summer

USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- Leaves are very similar to spinach and can be boiled as a side dish, sautéed with other vegetables or (like carrot or zucchini) chopped and added to muffins and breads
- Fibres from the stem can be made into twine for fishnets, snares and so on
- Boiling the leaves (as if making a tea) creates a rinse that improves the shininess of hair
- Cooking, crushing, drying and soaking the plant eliminates the stinging hairs, making the leaves safe to eat
- The health benefits of the plant are said to include relief from muscle and joint pain, as well as cleansing of the kidneys and liver

CAUTIONS

- Wear thick gloves when harvesting this plant – the hairs on it can pierce through latex gloves and inject chemicals that cause skin to burn and itch
- Do not consume this plant if you are pregnant (stimulates the uterus and can cause miscarriage) or diabetic (affects blood sugar levels)



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HERBACEOUS PLANTS



Wild Mint *Mentha spp.*

IDENTIFICATION

- 15 to 75 cm in height
- Square stem with opposite, toothed leaves ending in a sharp point
- Strong peppermint smell

LOCATION

- Low-lying areas, near marshes or swamps, near beaver dams

HARVESTING TIME

- Spring to fall

USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- Steeping a small handful of leaves and stems for 15 minutes creates a delicious tea that is said to be useful in treating menstrual cramps
- Dried, ground mint can be added to a variety of sweet and savoury dishes such as cakes, scones, pastas, pestos and so on

CAUTIONS

- Do not use the plant if it is covered in white mold (typically in fall)



Bryant Olsen



TREES



SHRUBS



Wild Sarsaparilla *Aralia nudicaulis*

IDENTIFICATION

- Up to 50 cm in height
- Leaves pointed at the tip and compound, with three to five leaflets per leaf
- Flowers small and green or white

LOCATION

- Moist areas, uplands, usually mature forest stands, often near oak trees

HARVESTING TIME

- Late summer through fall

USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- Roots can be prepared and cooked like potatoes, or boiled down to make a tea with a mild bite
- Some people use the roots as poultices for skin problems and tinctures for stomach and joint pain
- Sarsaparilla roots are a traditional ingredient in root beer

CAUTIONS

- Do not consume the berries, which have an unpleasant taste and may cause illness
- Do not confuse sarsaparilla with poison ivy, which has similarly shaped leaves; the stem of sarsaparilla is non-woody unlike the stem of poison ivy



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Woodland Strawberry *Fragaria vesca*

IDENTIFICATION

- 7.5 to 15 cm in height
- Trailing plant with dark green leaves in groups of three
- Flowers small and white with five petals; bloom in spring

LOCATION

- Trails, roadsides, meadows, forest edges, clearings

HARVESTING TIME

- Late spring to early summer

USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- The fruit, which ripens in June, can be made into jam, but doing so is highly labour intensive due to their small size and the large number required to make a small to medium sized batch of jam
- Leaves are high in vitamin C and can be used to make a subtly flavoured tea

CAUTIONS

- Do not consume wilted leaves, which may be toxic



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TREES



SHRUBS



Chanterelle *Cantharellus cibarius*

IDENTIFICATION

- Caps 2 to 10 cm in diameter
- Cap edge wavy (instead of smooth and flat)
- Caps and gills (long, thin tissues found under the cap) yellow to dark yellow in colour, stalk colour generally paler

LOCATION

- Moist, shaded areas, near hardwoods

HARVESTING TIME

- Spring to summer

USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- Chanterelles can be added to any dish in which mushrooms are used
- Drying chanterelles makes them tough and chewy; fresh or frozen preparations are recommended
- These mushrooms keep best if boiled in salt water and then frozen

CAUTIONS

- Do not confuse the chanterelle with the false chanterelle (*Hygrophoropsis aurantiaca*), which has a significantly skinnier stalk and is orange rather than yellow



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Giant Puffball *Calvatia gigantea*

IDENTIFICATION

- Globose and irregular fruiting body
- Very large, up to 50 cm across
- Outer wall is smooth and white when young, turning tan to cinnamon as it gets older
- When cut open, the center will be entirely white and uniform in texture, with no silhouette of gills

LOCATION

- Nutrient rich soil locations such as woodlands, fields, streambanks and gardens

HARVESTING TIME

- Late summer to early fall

USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- Referred to as breakfast mushrooms by some as they can be mixed with eggs well
- Slabs of this mushroom can be served as a side dish, and brown well when fried in butter
- Preserving this mushroom can be done by chopping, sautéing and then freezing

CAUTIONS

- Insides must be white when harvested, as any shade of yellow or purple can cause intestinal discomfort
- The outer covering of this mushroom may also cause discomfort, and it is recommended to peel and discard it



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TREES



SHRUBS



Honey Mushroom *Armillaria mellea*

IDENTIFICATION

- Caps are 3 – 10 cm across, convex and flat with a pale yellow-brown to tan colouration, sometimes appearing sticky on top
- Scales may appear on the cap, often near the center
- Stalks are 15 cm tall and 2 cm wide, with a distinct white flared ring
- Gills are short-decurrent



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LOCATION

- In moist forest areas, on logs or near stumps

HARVESTING TIME

- Late fall

USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- Only the caps are edible, as the stems are tough and fibrous
- Has a firm, meaty texture that keeps its shape even when cooked
- Used in soups and stews when dried and rehydrated

NOTES

- Some experience a mild bitter aftertaste, but this can be alleviated by parboiling the caps for about 5 minutes and discarding the water
- This species can emanate a bioluminescent glow called “fox fire”





Lobster Mushroom

Hypomyces lactifluorum

IDENTIFICATION

- Cap size around 5 to 12 cm, though this will vary based on the original mushroom parasitized
- Bright orange mushroom with firm cap and stem
- Irregular or seemingly deformed appearance
- Lobster mushrooms result from a relationship between *Lactarius* mushrooms and a parasite; this parasite turns the mushrooms bright orange and affects the shape and growth

LOCATION

- Wooded areas

HARVESTING TIME

- Midsummer

USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- Lobster mushrooms can be sliced and pan-fried in butter, and pair well with soy sauce or other Asian sauces
- They should be firm and white inside, not grey, soft or spotted
- Part of the mushroom cap may have to be removed to get rid of all dirt
- They can be dried and stored



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TREES



SHRUBS



Morel *Morchella* spp.

IDENTIFICATION

- Heads are long (conical or ellipsoid in shape) with a series of ridges and pitted chambers
- Hollow inside from tip of cap to bottom of stalk

LOCATION

- Forests, open meadows and highly disturbed (e.g., burned or grazed) landscapes

HARVESTING TIME

- Spring

USES & RELATED INFORMATION

- Morels, which have a meaty flavour even when they have been dried, make great stuffed mushrooms and pair well with butter or light cream sauces
- Dried morels can be stored for a relatively long period of time and should be rehydrated in hot water before use

CAUTIONS

- Do not confuse the morel for the poisonous false morel, which is not hollow on the inside; always confirm identification by consulting guides, images and experts
- Do not eat raw morels
- Cook morels very thoroughly, to avoid any possible stomach pain or discomfort



Jello5700/Signature Collection/Getty Images



HERBACEOUS PLANTS



FUNGI

Resources

Experts Consulted

Gammond, Pete: Wild food enthusiast, who focuses on edible and practical applications of plants

Moses, Raphael: Traditional elder in northwestern Ontario, who focuses on traditional uses of plants (both medicinal and edible) by Indigenous peoples

Reeves, Laura: Botanist/wild food enthusiast, who focuses on increasing public knowledge of and respect for the beauty, diversity and usefulness of wild plants

St. Amand, Dave: Local mushroom expert, who focuses on edible wild mushrooms

Stephenson, Karen: Owner of ediblewildfood.com, who focuses on nutritional aspects of plants, as well as both medicinal and edible applications

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TREES



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